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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Release 18-12
March 8, 2012

USFF Announces 2011 Fleet Sea, Shore Sailors of Year

By Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class (SW/AW) Phil Beaufort

NORFOLK, Va. – The commander of U.S. Fleet Forces (USFF) Command announced the 2011 USFF Fleet Sea and Shore Sailors of the Year (SOY) during a ceremony March 8 on board Naval Station Norfolk.

Adm. John C. Harvey Jr. announced Ship's Serviceman 1st Class (SW/AW) Angela A. Zamora, who was born in Ecuador and grew up in Jersey City, N.J., and is assigned to USS Wasp (LHD 1), and Aircraft Survival Equipmentman 1st Class (AW) Maria Johnson, of Dallas, assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, as the respective USFF Sea and Shore Sailors of the Year.

Prior to announcing the winners, Harvey congratulated all 12 SOY candidates for their outstanding performance, not just over the course of the year but throughout their entire careers.

"Sometimes these events become a little bit more about the ceremony than the focus of what these Sailors have accomplished, and I'd like to remind everyone that I think these Sailors are here representing the great commands of Fleet Forces, not simply because of what they have done, but because of how they have done it over years of service," said Harvey. "You are not here because you did more community service than anyone else; you are not here because you broke out on the ranking boards more than anyone else; you are here because your shipmates and

chain of commands believe in you as human beings, believe in you as petty officers, believe in you as Sailors who have devoted an extraordinary amount of time and effort to the Navy and the service of the nation."

The announcement came at the conclusion of a week of activities designed to highlight the individual accomplishments of the 12 finalists for the awards. Social functions sponsored by local Hampton Roads military and civilian supporters led up to the final step of the SOY competition, an intense review board for each candidate to determine who would be chosen to represent USFF as the Fleet Sea and Shore SOYs.

"I am so honored to be here and very humbled," said Zamora. "I am in awe of each of the Sailors in this competition. They truly represent the very best the Navy has to offer."

Choosing a winner from such an outstanding group was a tall task for the board members.

"The most difficult part about the Sailor of the Year competition is choosing the winner. In my book they're all deserving of first place, and that goes for every level of competition leading up to today," said USFF Fleet Master Chief (AW/NAC) Mike Stevens. "It was certainly more than personal accomplishments; the Sailors we recognized today are the types of Sailors who have the ability to influence those around them to accomplish truly great things in the most difficult of times. That is why they were chosen as this year's finalists, and that's why they'll continue to do great things for our Navy."

Johnson credits a large portion of her success to those around her.

"It took a lot of patience for me to get here. You have to listen to what your leaders are saying, and listen to your Sailors because you can't do it alone," said Johnson. "I did it with the help of my Sailors. When they succeeded, I succeeded. I also learned a lot from my leadership, and I had great leaders at VFA-106. They're the ones who molded me and made me the first class that I am."

According to Force Master Chief (AW/SW) Jay Powers, Navy Cyber Forces, this year's selection was as close as he's seen.

“Each year I think to myself, you can’t get better than this Sailor, and each year I’ve been amazed by the Sailors standing in front of me,” said Powers. “This bodes very well for our Navy, and our nation’s future.”

The USFF SOY program recognizes the best and brightest Sailors throughout USFF. A total of 12 candidates—six sea-based and six shore-based—competed for the two honors.

Each of the finalists was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, which was presented by Harvey and Stevens.

Zamora will be meritoriously advanced to the rank of chief petty officer by the Chief of Naval Operations this May. Johnson will go on to the next round of competition at the Vice Chief of Naval Operations Shore SOY competition this April in Washington, D.C.

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